

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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REPORT

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Polish Medical Mission  
in North Korea

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1. The Polish Medical Mission to North Korea consists of approximately 20 doctors and 10 nurses, headed by Dr. Tadeusz Orłowski. Its purpose is to organize the services at the Polish Red Cross Hospital and in the surrounding district. The mission's first activity was to take over management of the Polish Red Cross hospital at Hungnam, which was transferred in early 1955 to Hamhung, a district center of more than 80,000 inhabitants. An institute for training medical students, pharmacists, laboratory technicians, and sanitary workers is also located in Hamhung, and another such institute is reported to exist in North Korea.
2. In addition to its practical work the Hamhung hospital serves the district as a means of raising professional standards, as a communications center for the primitive medical institutions in the surrounding district, and as a source of consultation in matters of sanitation and hygiene. The level of the training institute in Hamhung is very low, and the Polish doctors do not have a high regard for either the professional achievements of young graduates or for the knowledge of local medical professors.
3. The Hamhung hospital is under the Ministry of Health. Dr. Orłowski and all doctors in charge of wards have native assistants who are eventually to replace the Poles. The hospital has three wards for internal diseases, three wards for surgery, one ward for obstetrics and gynecology, one ward for neurological cases, and one ward for ear, eye, nose, and throat diseases. Although each ward has approximately 50 beds, this figure is subject to change. The hospital also has four ambulatory wards for skin diseases, urological cases, tubercular patients, and dental treatment, and two bacteriological laboratories, a radiological laboratory, a dispensary, and a blood bank. While the technical equipment is still rather primitive, it is being constantly improved by replacements from Poland and the Soviet Union.
4. Administration of the hospital is similar to that of Polish medical institutions. As in the case of doctors, matrons in charge of wards are Polish but have Korean assistants. All nurses and administrative personnel are Korean.

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5. Treatment of out-patients is from 0900 to 1800 hours. Most doctors work at the hospital during the morning hours and devote their afternoons to consultations at the district centers, including Army institutions. The hospital has two lecture rooms where doctors from the neighborhood meet every week.
6. Medical treatment, sanitation, and hygiene are very poor in comparison with European standards, and the death rate is reported very high despite the assistance rendered by the hospital. A considerable part of all surgical cases are casualties of the recent war, and many of them leave the hospital with a high percentage of disability. Almost no effort is made to rehabilitate these patients, who consequently try to delay as long as possible their dismissal from the hospital.
7. The Polish doctors direct their principal efforts toward raising the professional standards of medical students and teachers and at improving the practices of sanitation. Language presents a major problem. Lectures were formerly given in Polish and then translated into Korean, but they are now simultaneously translated by interpreters. Doctors' assistants must also help with the training of medical students and participate in weekly conferences on various professional questions. Polish nurses have the responsibility of instruction on the care of the sick. Occasional Polish or Soviet films on hygiene and sanitation are shown.
8. Prescriptions by Korean doctors are under strict supervision and must be accompanied by the diagnosis of the case under treatment so that the chief doctor and the head of the dispensary can exercise control of medication. Grave mistakes in this respect are not infrequent and have been the subject of numerous conferences.
9. On the whole, the mission has been accepted by the local medical workers. However, Polish doctors find it difficult to adapt themselves to Korean conditions.

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1. Comment: all installations of the Polish Red Cross Hospital in North Korea were transferred to the North Korean government on 2 August 1955.

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